DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 769 RC 023 459

AUTHOR O'Neal, Linda; Cox, Dana
TITLE Then and Now: Small Rural Schools Revisited.
PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Brain Drain; Community Schools; Disadvantaged Youth; *Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; Parent Participation; *Rural Schools; *School Community Relationship; *School Effectiveness; School Size; *Small Schools; Teacher Collaboration
IDENTIFIERS Rural School and Community Trust; *Sense of Community

ABSTRACT

Two decades ago, many of the strengths and advantages of small rural schools were understood. These include a greater sense of community, which enables closer relations between faculty and administration, between teachers and students, and among teachers; less violence; better school-community relationships; more parent participation; greater frequencies of learner-centered or nongraded approaches; more favorable teacher-student ratios; and less bureaucratic overload. However, at that time the importance of school size was not clear. Research conducted in the last 20 years reveals that size does matter. Size is a particularly important variable for the educational success of children of lower socioeconomic status. Poorer children are more likely to excel in small schools. By not sizing down our schools, we may be doing a disservice to disadvantaged children. Currently there is a renewed appreciation for small rural schools. Ironically, the strongest praise for small rural schools comes from urban areas, where small schools are a reform concept. If given the chance, rural schools might have been able to maximize their educational success by building upon the characteristics intrinsic to them. Instead, rural schools and their communities were forced to conform to a one-size-fits-all formula for educational achievement, which has negatively impacted many rural communities. Due to the resurgence of support for small community schools, rural schools may be able to claim the recognition they deserve. (Contains 23 references.) (TD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Running Head: THEN AND NOW: SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS REVISITED

ED 464 769

Then and Now: Small Rural Schools Revisited

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Linda O'Neal

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RC023459

Abstract

This article is a twenty year retrospective of the literature of small rural schools. There have been over 8,000 entries since the original article entitled "Rural Education: Past and Present (Part I and II)" was published (O'Neal & Beckner, 1981). This analysis compares then and now with updates on trends. The intent is informing all those associated with small rural schools to be skillful in assisting them to reach their potential.

Then and Now: Small Rural Schools Revisited

Twenty years ago, the literature on small rural schools was scant. Currently, that same literature has over 8,000 entries. Clearly, the twenty years that passed saw a focus on the national importance of rural education. Why this importance?

> "In the United States, 45 percent of schools and over 50 percent of local education agencies are located in rural areas and small towns. In many rural school districts, the school system is the largest employer in the county. People in these areas are grappling with uniquely rural issues such as economics of scale and the outmigration of young people seeking job opportunities elsewhere. Leaders in rural education are being called upon to help solve problems that are increasingly complex, information-based, and globally connected. What is at stake is the survival—and transformation—of rural life as well as its traditional and emerging contributions to the national economy and spirit." (AEL, 2000, p. 1).

What is meant by rural? The Appalachian Educational Laboratory Rural Specialty is "convinced it must refer to the ways of life centered in the community, sense of place, and lasting relationships" (AEL, 2000, p. 2).

With over 8,000 entries in twenty years, what can be said about the volumes written? Sophisticated, broad, deep, systematic, and comprehensive are the attributes that most readily apply. The following is an example to substantiate that view.

> "In 1991, the Subcommittee on Rural Education of the Federal Interagency Committee on Education (FICE Subcommittee) and the United States Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) developed an Agenda for Research and Development on Rural Education (FICE

Subcommittee, 1991). In 1992, the Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) conducted a modified Delphi study, with selected members of the Rural Education Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), to validate and update the original agenda. This 2 year effort resulted in a "menu' for research and development in rural education (Hambrick, Sanders, Stowers, & Williams, 1994)."

"The menu included six major topics representing a total of 47 areas (Table 1). Possible uses for the menu might be guided by responses to three questions: What are the purposes of the menu? Does the menu "hang together"? How comprehensive is the menu?" (Harmon, Howley, & Sanders, 1996).

DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN RURAL EDUCATION

Table 1
Major Topics and Areas of R &D Menu of Rural Education

Major Topic	**Area**
1.Overall effectiveness of rural schools	A. Improve access to educational opportunity in isolated rural communities. B. Identify the problems unique to the delivery of education in isolated rural communities in the following special populations: handicapped, disadvantaged, and gifted. C. Identify characteristics of effective rural schools D. Conduct evaluation studies of student achievement in rural schools. E. Assess the federal role in rural education. F. Assess the impact of educational reform on rural schools. G. Assess the degree to which rural schools are educating students for participation in a national economy versus a local economy. H. Assess SEA role in rural education. I. Assess teacher education institutions' role in rural education. J. Assess student expectations-view of the future. K. Assess the ways in which rural school culture breaks down class distinctions or promotes increased cultural understanding. L. Assess the role of rural schools in an "integrated services" approach to meeting community needs.

	M. Understand the change process and extent to which change initiated in one part of school can encourage change throughout the school culture.
2. Curricular provisions in rural schools	A. Provide adult literacy improvement in isolated rural communities. B. Assess satisfaction of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders with current curriculum and instruction. C. Assess how state and federal curriculum development projects consider the needs of rural schools.
3. School and community partner	A.Identify effective school/community private sector partnerships. B. Assess how federal/state/local policies are impacting rural schools and rural communities. C. Review legal procedures and issues pertaining to school and community partnerships on behalf of rural schools. D. Examine the factors of rural community economies that influence rural students' decisions to remain in school and graduate. E. Assess if Native American communities, or their learning environments, differ from other rural communities. F. Assess the role of the rural school in promoting employability. G. Identify effective alternative schooling programs in the rural communities. H. Identify the social and cultural issues of isolated rural communities that impact rural education. I. Assess the level of parental and community involvement in rural areas.
4. Human resources for rural schools	A. Identify successful strategies for the recruitment of qualified personnel B. Identify successful strategies for the retention of qualified personnel in rural schools. C. Identify strategies that have been successful for releasing rural teachers from their classrooms for professional development. D. Identify successful leadership styles of effective rural school administrators. E. Identify the strategies used by administrators to comply with the state certification mandates. F. Assess the impact of recent state certification mandates on teacher availability in rural schools. G. Identify effective beginning teacher mentoring programs for rural schools.
5. Use of technology in rural schools certification mandates	A. Identify rural schools that have demonstrated effective use of advanced interactive instructional technology. B. Assess the impact of the advanced technology on rural school curriculum.

C. Assess the effects of advanced technologies on traditional rural values of closeness, connection, or personal relationships in learning interactions.
D. Assess the implications for instructional staff and support personnel who are implementing advanced technology in rural school communities.
E. Identify the staff development strategies that have been most successful in helping schools, teachers, and support personnel embrace and integrate advanced technologies into their overall rural school system.
F. Identify rural schools that successfully have implemented distance education via telecommunications.
G. Conduct technology cost-effectiveness studies.
H. Assess the level of private support for use of technology in rural schools.
I. Identify innovative, low-cost alternatives to current programs delivered by telecommunications.

A. Analyze the policies of school finance in rural communities.
B. Identify alternatives to school consolidation for rural school communities.
C. Assess how federal and state fund distribution formulas have impacted rural schools in their operations and course offerings.
D. Assess the impact on rural schools of state school reform policies on course quality, diversity of course offerings, and student outcomes.
E. Look at ways to equalize salary levels for teachers/administrators in rural schools compared to salary levels for those in large communities.
F. Compare and contrast the roles and strategies of rural interest groups in the several school finance court cases in the states.

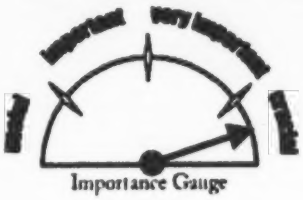
Additionally, there are "two significant rural school improvement efforts: the Rural Systemic Initiative and the Annenberg Rural Challenge (now called The Rural School and Community Trust). The Rural Systemic Initiative program focused on improving math and science education in persistently poor rural communities across the nation. The Annenberg Rural Challenge program has worked with a variety of schools to help team a "curriculum of place" and help rural students to learn about their communities, economies, and thus their futures" (Dewees & Collins, 1999, p. 1).

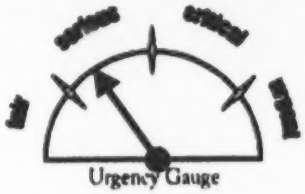
> "The Rural Trust's new report *Why Rural Matters: The Need for Every State to Take Action on Rural Education* by Policy Analyst Elizabeth Beeson and Policy Director Marty Strange is the first in a series of reports on the context of rural education in the 50 states. The authors believe it is the first attempt to describe the importance of rural education in each of the 50 states and to suggest the urgency with which policymakers should address the needs of rural schools and communities. Each state was ranked against the other 49 according to 8 "importance" indicators and 11 "urgency" indicators. You can access the news release and report for each state at http://www.ruraledu.org/streport.html " (AEL, 2001, p. 1).

There is a report produced for each state. The North Carolina chart is included as an example. Additionally, the chart delineates the eight importance indicators and the eleven urgency indicators. The chart follows on the succeeding page:

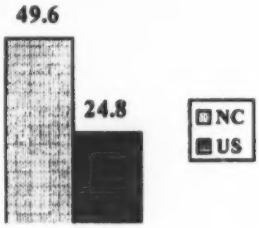
Importance Gauge *A rank of 1 is most important*	**NC**	**Rank**
Percent of state's population that is rural	49.6%	6
Number of rural people	3290,859	3
Percent of public schools in rural areas	29.1 %	21
Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools	24.1%a	15
Percent of students enrolled in rural schools who are minorities	31.3%	9
Average number of students to average number of grades	99.3	44
Percent of students attending small rural schools	10.5%	17
Percent of rural students in poverty	19%	19
Average rural teacher's salary	$26,818	22
Difference between rural teacher salaries and teacher salaries in the rest of the state	$237	48
Percent of rural students who are free lunch eligible	20.3%	32
Percent of rural communities scoring below average on the Education Climate Index	35.2%	12
Average rural student to teacher ratio	14.6	29
Percent of rural householders with less than 12 years of school	41.6%	11
Percent of rural schools with Internet access	88.1%	42
Percent of teachers teaching out-of-field who are rural	29.5%	14
Percent of rural expenditures spent on instruction	54.1%	35
Percent of rural schools with declining enrollments of at least 10%	10%	46

NORTH CAROLINA ranks 3rd in number of rural people, 6th in percentage of population that is rural, 9th in percentage of minority rural students and 11th in the percentage of rural adults with less than a 12th grade education. The gap between rural and other teachers' pay is minimal, and rural schools are big but classes are moderate. Rural education is crucial in North Carolina, and indications are serious that it needs policymakers' attention.

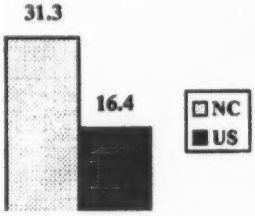




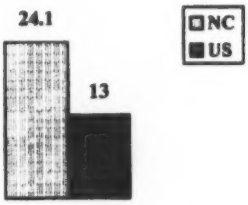
Percent of population living in rural places



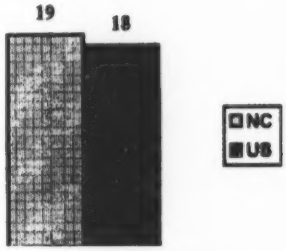
Percent of rural minority students



Percent of public school students enrolled in rural schools

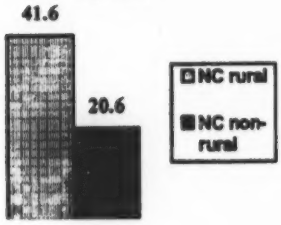


Percent of rural students in poverty



Average base teacher salary

Percent of householders with less than 12 years of school (no diploma)



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Two decades ago the trends, strengths and weaknesses among small rural schools had to be extrapolated from the existing literature. They still seem relevant today:

Trends

- Renewed interest and concern over the plight of rural education in general.
- Federal commitment in recognition of the fact that rural America exists, that rural society has problems, and that the Federal Government must play a major role in providing solutions.
- Commitment of the National Institute of Education to the Rural Experimental Schools Program, which emphasized locally-initiated comprehensive educational change dependent on community participation, with provision for systematic documentation and evaluation.
- The continued funding of the Education Resources Information Center/Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS).
- Emergence of regional education service agencies (Educational Corporations) designed to serve rural and small schools.
- Linkage between the Appalachian Regional Lab and local school districts in moving from the development stage to actual program implementation.
- Reemergence of the "community school" concept.
- The myriad of agencies and organizations at the local, state, and national levels concerned with rural problems and education.
- The movement by teachers and teacher organizations to improve the quality of rural education.

- Conferences which provide impetus for rural community improvement through the schools.

(O'Neal & Beckner, 1981, p. 18).

Strengths of Small Schools-General

- Close relations exist between the faculty and the administration. These relationships are frequently more personal than role-expected.
- Bureaucratic overload, red tape, and intricate regulations are not so prevalent in small schools as in large.
- Decisions in the small school can be made more on an individual basis rather than on a collective basis. This relates both to staff and students.
- There is a greater sense of community felt by everyone in the school. Smallness, by its very nature, ordains involvement.
- Intimate, vis-à-vis relationships are possible between teachers and students in the classroom and in the more informal settings in the school.
- In general, there are more favorable students/teacher ratios in small schools as compared to larger ones.
- There is a greater possibility of a small school becoming, in fact and in operation, learner-centered, which may well provide for a positive affective climate.
- The potentiality for effective individualization of instruction and for broad independent study programs is great.
- Since numbers alone preclude ability grouping at any one grade level, this averts many of the deleterious effects of such a practice. Moreover, the

possibility of grade-crossing and age-crossing in classrooms grows significantly as the size of the school diminishes.

- A small school presents students with a greater opportunity to discover their identity.
- A small school provides greater opportunity for each student to participate in the total school activity program. Each student is needed in the program; hence, the activity program becomes a learning activity rather than merely a stage for the stellar performances of a few.
- The inescapable importance of the single individual in all phases of the program is to be noted. Every study is needed; each teacher plays a vital role.
- Guidance becomes a staff-wide function in reality rather than a service provided by specialist. This total staff involvement in guidance, inevitable in a schools setting in which everyone is known to everyone else, makes for truly effective guidance at the point of need.
- Means and measures to ensure proper discipline are not so demanding and obtrusive as they are in larger schools. In consequence, more staff effort can be devoted to the teaching process.
- Teachers are constrained by the logistics of small schools to be more generalists than specialists, thus providing that breadth of educational and human contacts so desirable in our schools and so infrequently achieved.
- Smallness in a school fosters closer relationships among teachers, resulting in a more unified staff approach to such problems as articulation,

program change, the determination of the fundamentally purposes of the school, etc.

- Change can be effected with greater ease in a small school once the desire and the determination have asserted themselves.
- The nongrading of a small high school, placing every student on his own individual progress plan, attains an immediate feasibility that is not present in a larger school.
- Small schools can -indeed frequently must- cross-grade students in classes. This results in a more stimulating age mix than is to be found in the average classroom in larger schools where the number of peer models is stringently limited. Thus, a multiple-age classroom is more than an expedient; it is an educational advantage.
- The schedule can be altered more readily in a small school to permit field trips, school-wide assemblies, workstudy programs, etc.
- Close working relationships normally exist between the small school and its community. Hence, the staff of the school can establish an authentic identification with the community, cultivating mutual respect and understanding.
- Teachers in small schools get to know parents better, thus providing more effective cooperation in the resolution of whatever problems might arise.
- In small schools, a larger percentage of the parents become involved in school affairs than in larger ones. This parental involvement leads not

only to better community support but also enhances the total educational program.

- The small school, if properly directed, can become the community school, serving the needs of its students and satisfying the wide panoply of educational demands and desires of the community at large.

Weaknesses of Small Schools – General

- A quality small school program requires a relatively high per student expenditure. Small schools are not inherently efficient – that is, they don't educate the largest number of students for the smallest amount of money.
- The small school's enrollment makes it difficult to offer a broad and variegated curriculum.
- There is a paucity in the small school of varying and contrasting psychological environments for its students. The student body in a small school normally is more homogeneous in ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural background than would be true of the students in a larger school.
- Limited alternatives are open to a student and teacher when they become embroiled in conflict or antagonism. A student generally cannot be moved to another section of the same course since many courses are offered on a one-section-only basis.
- There is a tendency for small schools to seek to mirror-image larger schools in programs, practices, procedures and outcomes. Frequently this leads to an inappropriate, inferior program.

- Limited supportive services – health services, psychological services, counseling services – are available to students in small schools.
- Difficulties frequently are experienced by students transferring into a small school from a larger one because of the narrower band of course offerings in the small school.
- Small schools experience difficulty in providing programs other than those that are strictly academic. The need for vocational/occupational education is a pressing one in most small schools.
- Students with exceptional learning problems frequently are not adequately or appropriately cared for in small schools since the provision of special education is most expensive when the numbers to be treated are small.
- The prevailing emphasis on the values and virtues of size in the American ethos at times makes it difficult to sustain morale in a small school. It is difficult for teachers and students in small schools not to develop some kind of inferiority – perhaps even a defeatist- attitude unless they are unusually perceptive and can read the emerging tends in our turbulent society.
- While generalist teachers on the staff represent a strength, there is an obverse side to this matter. These teachers have to function in more areas than their peers in larger schools; this sometimes results in inappropriate assignments, with teachers working outside their fields of strength.
- Teachers are frequently isolated from their colleagues in their respective fields making exchange of professional ideas within a field rather difficult.

- If the school is geographically isolated, as well as small, there is a clear and present danger of cultural impoverishment.
- The small school may have some difficulties in staff recruitment and maintenance. The multiple preparations, the housing situations in the community, the generally smaller salaries, and similar factors make recruitment a continuing concern.
- The community may exert an overbearing influence on the small school since it is so central to the life of the people as a whole. The community may impose its mores on the school program, even when they are inappropriate for young people preparing to live in contemporary America.

(O'Neal & Beckner, 1981, p. 18 – 21).

Throughout history "small" has been synonymous with "rural" schools. Rural communities were not only connected to their schools they generally ran them. However, due to public schools adopting an industrial mass-production model of schooling during the industrialization of our country, many rural schools were forced to consolidate, which eliminated thousands of small schools (Nachtigal, 1994). Schools across the nation were being evaluated to determine their effectiveness in educating our children and large, urban schools were the yard sticks by which they were measured. This resulted in a near extinction of the small rural schools and gave way to the large bureaucratic schools.

Two decades ago we understood many of the strengths and advantages that small rural schools had to offer our children. However, we were not sure of how important a variable size was for a comprehensive education. "The size of a school is not necessarily

the determining factor in producing quality students- it is probably not even the most important factor", O'Neal and Beckner wrote of school size in 1981. However current research explicitly reveals that size does matter. "In fact, there is enough evidence now of such positive effects- and devastating effects of large size on substantial numbers of youngsters- that it seems morally questionable not to act on it" (Raywid, 1998). Size is a particularly important variable for the educational success of children of lower socioeconomic status. "A growing number of studies suggest that equally poor kids attending large and small schools learn more in the latter" (Howley, 1997, p. 25). By not sizing down our schools, we may be doing a disservice to our already disadvantaged children.

It is well known that many of our rural communities are just as impoverished as many of our inner-city communities. "Rural areas have a higher proportion of residents in poverty or near poverty compared to metropolitan areas, exceeded only by central cities" (Dewees, 1999, p. 2). Understanding the effects of school size, we know that poorer children excel much higher in small schools. Therefore, it only makes good sense that children of these rural communities, whom are more apt to be of lower socioeconomic status, would achieve higher levels of educational success more efficiently via small schools. By continuing to provide education in a setting that current literature suggests hinders children that are of lower socioeconomic status we are only adding to their disadvantage.

There is currently a national phenomenon of renewed appreciation for small rural schools. Ironically the strongest praise for small rural schools now comes from urban reform efforts, where small schools are a *reform concept*, and proponents in cities ask one

another if they are "doing small schools" (Howley & Harmon, 1997). If given the chance, our rural schools may have been able to maximize their educational success by building upon the characteristics, as cited 20 years ago (O'Neal, et. al., 1981), that were intrinsic to them. Instead we forced rural schools and their communities to conform to a one-size-fits-all formula for educational achievement. However, due to the resurgence in support of small, community schools, our rural schools may be able to claim the recognition they deserve. As we look for examples where school violence is non-existent, small rural schools hold promise.

Over the years rural communities have lost many bright, productive citizens to larger communities that had more to offer educationally and economically. "Those students who do aspire to higher education tend to be the ones who migrate out of the rural communities" (Kannapel, 1999). Though many of these individuals would have preferred to remain or return to their home towns upon completing college, they were unable to do so because of the lack of career opportunities that reward higher education in most rural areas. Other than obtaining a job at a school, there are perhaps less than a handful of other career alternatives for such individuals.

Understanding the issues at hand in their communities, small rural schools have the opportunity to prepare their youngsters for a productive life in their communities. In the past this type of preparation may have included classes like home economics or agricultural classes. Today our horizons are being broadened much further. Technology assists individuals whom are located in small, remote areas to be connected to the rest of the global market. This allows many an opportunity to compete for a better way of life that they had not had before.

Small rural schools have a wonderful opportunity to assist their students in achieving not only higher levels of educational success but also can prepare them to achieve career satisfaction while remaining in their rural areas. If employment opportunities are limited near a rural community, a school could shape the curriculum so that it encourages an entrepreneurial spirit among students. "It may be necessary to create a job rather than find one" (Nachtigal, 1994). Generally, traditional curriculum doesn't facilitate an environment that encourages entrepreneurial skills, such as learning through trial and error, but relies on lecture and testing methods of learning. However many educators understand the importance of such skills and are incorporating these valuable methods into their curriculum.

There are many success stories in which community businesses have teamed up with local schools and created partnerships. A case study observing small community school - small business partnerships stated, "Local businesses tap into a reliable employment pool (when partnering with a local school). Active student involvement with local residents provides meaningful opportunities for adults to teach and return something to the community" (Salant, 1998, p. 6). The relationship becomes a reciprocal one in which each depends upon the other to obtain and maintain higher levels of success. Both adults and children of the community are working together to shape and expand their success as individuals and as a community.

"Small schools simply have a better chance of becoming "communities of learners" where all individuals associated with a school – including teachers, students, staff members, administrators, parents, and citizens- are bound together through a deep sense of belonging and shared responsibilities" (Black, 1996). Persons that are actively

engaged in creating an environment are more apt to remain in that environment. Adolescence is a wonderful time to help individuals understand their importance in their community. Community schools that shape their curriculum to address issues pertinent to the community equip their youth to sustain vitality in the community. This enables social growth for the community as a whole. This does not necessarily encourage an increase in the population, however it facilitates an environment in which the quality of lives of the people in the community can be enriched and improved upon.

"If rural communities are to continue to exist as more than a staging area for moves to larger places… they must provide the opportunity for their inhabitants to live well" (Nachtigal, 1994, p. 6). Small rural schools are able to address the needs of the majority of community members. Using the school building for community activities strengthens community and school ties. Some suggestions include designating a room in which community affairs could be conducted even during school hours, …a library that also serves the community,… a place in which the community members can have access to technology (Harmon, 1998). These schools can also serve as a distance-learning center for agencies and private citizens. In these instances the schools are actively engaging citizens in opportunities to better themselves, and the community at large.

Current literature informs us that comprehensive health care is another need for many rural communities. Communities, specifically impoverished communities, may be greatly served by school-based health care centers for students. "In 1990, Kentucky legislature mandated that when at least 20% of local students are eligible for free meals, family resource centers should be established near elementary schools and youth services centers established near secondary schools" (Salant, 1998, p. 6). If the need is great

enough some of these school-based health centers also allow parents and family members of the students to receive health services.

Rural areas are experiencing growth in diverse ethnic populations, e.g. North Carolina has experienced a large growth in our Hispanic populations, particularly in rural areas. Currently our rural school systems have the fewest resources to deal with an influx of students who speak little or no English (Duke, 2001). Many in these communities may find this frustrating, however small rural schools may have an advantage in accommodating this change in population merely due to their size. Small rural schools generally have less "red tape" to prevent them from making curriculum changes. They have a unique opportunity to shape their curriculum to aid in these children's assimilation into our culture. In the process we also become equipped to expand the cultural knowledge of our traditionally homogenous population of children in the rural communities of North Carolina.

Schools that provide these types of community services not only directly help students and citizens but also help to facilitate more parent and citizen involvement with school activities. "In order to provide the best education for rural children, schools must recognize that parents are the most stable influence in the lives of their children- parents who are empowered and included in the education and academic aspects of their children's lives and who are welcomed as major role players in helping maintain the continuity of education and health experiences and needed services" (Tyree, 1996, p. 15). Parents and community members that team together with school faculty and staff, facilitate an optimal learning atmosphere for their children. Children that receive

education in such enriched environments will often result in high achieving, successful, caring citizens for their communities.

Over the past couple decades we have watched our schools go through many changes. Unfortunately, many of these changes have negatively impacted our rural communities. Perhaps if given the chance, our small rural schools would have maximized their effectiveness by building upon their advantages that were intrinsic to them. Although it's taken many years, our nation is seeing the importance of small rural schools and their impact on their communities, especially poorer communities.

> "The biggest threat though, is not poverty, but impoverishment- those forces that decide the nature and extent of poverty, who has to be poor and how miserable a life they have to lead as a result. Schools that are too large contribute to the processes of impoverishment. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer, partly as a result of their schooling" (Howley, 1997).

Studies show that many of our rural communities are of the poorest in the nation. Let us join forces and see that the recommendations in *Why Rural Matters: The Need for Every State to Take Action on Rural Education* become a reality (AEL, 2001, p. 1). These powerful analyses can help us make small rural schools reach their potential.

References

Appalachia Educational Laboratory. (2001). About the Specialty. The AEL Rural Specialty, 1-2. Retrieved May 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http:www.ael.org/rel/rural/rurlabot.htm.

Black, S. (1996). Size Matters. The Executive Educator, April, 31-33.

Dewees, S. (1999). Improving Rural School Facilities for Teaching and Learning. Eric Digest, 1-5. Retrieved September 7, 2000 for the World Wide Web: http:www.ael.org/eric/digests/edorc998.htm.

Dewees, S. & Collins, T. (1999). Special Issue. The Rural Educator, 21, 2, 1 – 2. Retrieved May 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http:www.ail.org/re/rural/ruraled.htm.

Duke, C. (2001). Reich College of Education (RCOE) Dean's Update. Received by College of Education, Appalachian State University, Professors on February 2, 2001.

Harmon, H. (1997). Rural Schools in a Global Economy. The School Administrator, October, 32-37.

Harmon, H., Howley, C., & Sanders, J. (1996). Doctoral Research in Rural Education and the Rural R & D Menu. Journal of Research in Rural Education, 12, 2, 68 – 75.

Harmon, H., Howley, C., Smith, C., & Dickens, B. (1998). Planning Schools for Rural Communities. Appalachia Educational Lab & ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. ED 418820.

Howley, C. (1997). Dumbing Down by Sizing Up. The School Administrator, October, 24-30.

Howley, C. (1996). Ongoing Delemmmas of School Size: A Short Story. Eric Digest, 1-4. Retrieved April 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http://ehostvgw21.epnet.com.

Howley, C., & Harmon, H. (1997). Sustainable Small Schools in the Rural U.S.: Construct and Exploratory Analysis. Appalachia Educational Lab & ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. ED405165.

Huang, G. (1999). Sociodemographic Changes: Promise and Problems for Rural Education. Eric Digest, 1-4. Retreived April 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http://ehostvgw21.epnet.com.

Kannapel, P., & DeYoung, A. (1999). The Rural School Problem in 1999: A Review and Critique of the Literature. Journal of Research in Rural Education, 15, 67-79.

Maynard, S., & Howley, A. (1997). Parent and Community Involvement in Rural Schools. Eric Digest, 1-4. Retrieved April 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http://ehostvgw21.epnet.com.

Nachitagal, P. (1994). Rural Schools, Rural Communities: An Alternative View of the Future. Appalachia Educational Lab & ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. ED390602.

O'Neal, L., & Beckner, W. (1981). Rural Education: Past and Present. The Rural Educator, 3, 1, 15 – 19.

O'Neal, L., & Beckner, W. (1981). Rural Education: Past and Present (Part II). The Rural Educator, 3, 2, 17 – 27.

The Rural School and Community Trust (Rural Trust). (2000). North Carolina's Rural Schools in Serious Need of Attention, Report Says Large Rural Population and High Rural Poverty Levels Cited. Full report available.

Raywid, M. (1999). Current Literature on Small Schools. Eric Digest, 1-4. Retrieved April 25, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http://ehostvgw21.epnet.com.

Raywid, M. (1998). Small Schools: A Reform that Works. Educational Leadership, December/January, 34-39.

Salant, P., & Waller, A. What Difference do Local Schools Make? A Literature Review and Bibliography. Retrieved April 26, 2001 from the World Wide Web: http://www.ruraledu.org/salant.html.

Stoops, J., & Hull, J. (1996). Rural Service Integration: A Report of Research and Practice. Rural Educator, 17,1, 15-19.

Tyree, C. (1996). Collaboration and Empowerment A Prescription for Rural School Education. Rural Educator, 17, 2, 14-17.